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Central Intelligence Agency



DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

3 June 1986

AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTAN: Air Attacks

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Summary

Soviet and Afghan airstrikes into Pakistani territory have increased considerably during the past two months, but are still confined to the border area. The airstrikes mainly reflect the increasing tempo of Soviet and Afghan military operations in eastern Afghanistan but may also be meant to apply political pressure on Islamabad. US-supplied F-16 aircraft and missiles have improved Pakistan's air defenses, but have not deterred the attacks. As long as Soviet and Afghan ground activity continues near the border, we expect airstrikes will continue at high levels. Islamabad is likely to use continuing attacks to justify requests for more advanced military equipment.

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Cross-Border Air Violations Increase

Aircraft from Afghanistan have violated the Pakistani border at a substantially increased rate over the past. According to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry, aircraft have crossed the border about 380 times so far this year compared with about 275 incidents in all of 1985 and only about 100 in 1984. Although we do not have precise statistics, air strikes during the first few years of the war almost certainly did not exceed the 1984 level. Roughly one-fourth of the air violations last year were bombing or rocket attacks, usually lasting less than 15 minutes: the others were probably reconnaissance flights in search of insurgent camps or accidental overflights in the wake of bombing runs on the Afghan side of the border,

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This memorandum was prepared by the Pakistan/Bangladesh 25X1 Branch, South Asia Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 2 June 1986 was used in its preparation. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division NESA M#86-20083

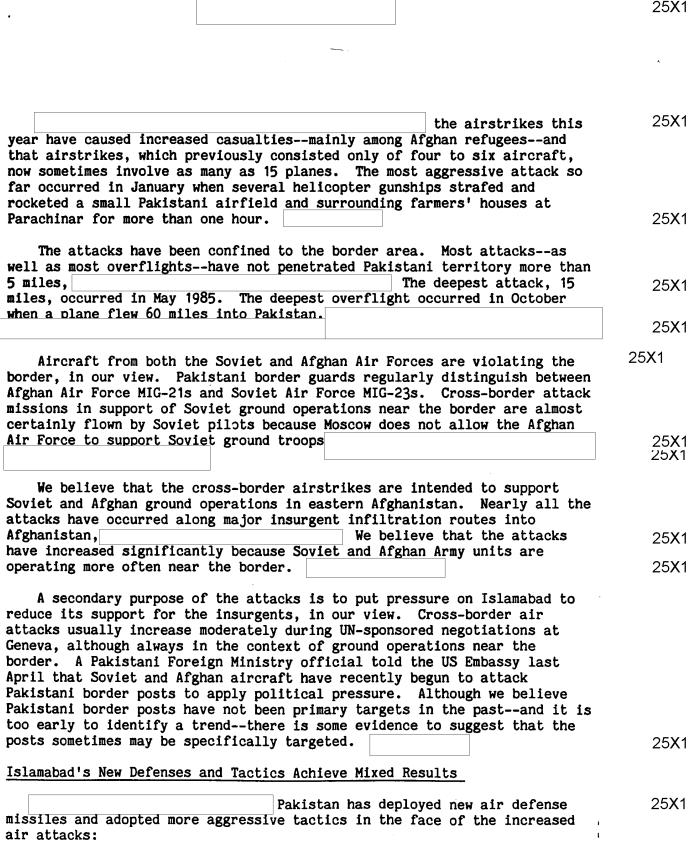
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-- Islamabad began deploying surface-to-air missiles--Stingers,

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Outlook

Air violations are likely to remain at higher levels as long as Soviet and Afghan ground activity continues near the border area. We believe Soviet and Afghan fighters will begin to accompany ground attack aircraft more regularly to protect them from the F-16s and may try to lure an F-16 into Afghan airspace. The US Embassy reports that the Pakistanis believe that Soviets/Afghans attempted to lure Pakistani F-16s into ambushes over Afghan territory early this year. Soviet and Afghan aircraft are armed with radar-guided infrared missiles which have a longer range than the AIM-9Ls, but are less accurate.

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If Pakistan begins to use its surface-to-air missiles more effectively, Soviet and Afghan aircraft probably will fly higher--as they sometimes do in Afghanistan--to avoid the missiles. This tactic would reduce bombing accuracy and make the aircraft more vulnerable to Pakistani radar detection.

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Soviet and Afghan air violations probably will remain confined to the border area. We doubt the Soviets and Afghans will attack Pakistani military targets or insurgent headquarters in Peshawar and Quetta--cities that are 25 and 60 miles respectively from the border--because of concern about the US response and the likely international outcry. We believe that Moscow and Kabul calculate that the greatest utility of air attacks will continue to be against insurgent supply lines that are close to the border. Moscow and Kabul also probably believe that their sabotage campaign in the Pakistani border area--which caused about 50 deaths and 150 injuries last year--is as effective as deeper cross-border air attacks in intimidating Islamabad and harassing insurgents. In our view, the Afghan insurgents may be more influenced by the sabotage campaign than by the punishment inflicted by a bombing campaign. Because the campaign is occurring in areas that have a more direct impact on Pakistani citizens, it affords more opportunities to weaken Pakistani support for the insurgents.

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Implications for the United States

Islamabad will ask the United States for increased military assistance to counter the airstrikes, in our view. Pakistani officials will almost certainly renew their requests for more AIM-9L missiles, and they may ask for the Stinger Post--an advanced version of the Stinger scheduled to enter the US inventory next year--because they still probably believe that it is a technologically superior missile. Islamabad may also formally request the E2-C Hawkeye airborne surveillance aircraft and the Improved-Hawk, a medium-to-high altitude air defense missile system that would enable Pakistan to attack nearly all intruding aircraft. Because of the E2-C's and I-Hawk's high price--about \$200 million--Islamabad may renew its request for supplementary aid outside the regular foreign military sales

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